

# AESTHETIC PLEASURE

BETTY MURNAN

Kitty looked skeptically at the tall soda glass in her left hand. It wasn't too shiny, so she dropped it into the dish water — not that she was particular — but sodas were her specialty. There was nothing she liked better than watching a soda bubble up in a tall glass. She took another glass from the shelf behind her, jerked just the right amount of chocolate syrup into it, tipped it sideways, and ran a thin, hard stream of carbonated water clear around the edge of the syrup until it bubbled nearly up to the rim of the glass. Two dippers of ice cream, a little more fizz, a dash of whipped cream topping, and her masterpiece was done. For a moment she surveyed the rich brown of the chocolate and the smooth purity of the whipped cream standing high above the edge of the glass, and then called out, "One brown up." As a lean, dark-haired boy approached the fountain, she smiled and asked quickly, "What'll it be, Pete, a twenty-one?" He nodded, so she plunged her hand into the icy water of the cooler, pulled out a bottle of coke, and gave it to him. "Can't talk to you right now, Pete, I've got a million table orders to fill." Even while she spoke, her hands were busy pouring marshmallow syrup over an order of chocolate ice cream. "Marsh down on brown. Pick it up." Her hands flew on, making fountain cokes and opening bottles, packing ice cream, making sodas and sundaes, and washing glasses.

Finally there was a lull in business. She looked at Pete and forgot to smile. "Pete, I'm gettin' damn tired of this job. Oh, I know it looks like fun. Well, it isn't. It wouldn't be so bad if I could just stand here and make stuff, but I sure get tired of rushing all the time. And then there's the back bar to be shined, the napkin holders

to be shined and filled, the stove to be scoured, and beer orders to be filled. Let me tell you, it's no fun to run to the back room and fish around in the beer cooler for a dozen cans of Falstaff. It's getting so my arm is numb with cold about three-fourths of the time."

Pete merely looked at her and laughed. "You'll get over it. There are worse things you know."

"Oh yeah? If there are, I don't want to know about it. Believe me, if I didn't have to work, I wouldn't be here now." That was as far as she got. She paused for breath and a voice from the other end of the fountain called to her. "Kitty, it's time to do dishes." Kitty answered with a meek, "Yes, May," and started toward the back room. Well, that was the last straw. Oh, how she would have liked to have said, "Do 'em yourself." But that wouldn't work either. Back talk never got her anywhere. At first it had hurt like the dickens to keep biting her tongue, but now she guessed it must be getting calloused.

By this time one of the delivery boys had dragged the large metal dish-container to the back room. She groaned when she saw how full it was and knew that it would take her an hour and a half to finish them and scrub the towels. And the back room was awfully crowded and awfully hot. She filled one side of the sink with hot, soapy water and the other side with clear water and began to scrape the food from the dishes into the garbage can. Steam rose up in great clouds and the smell of the garbage was sickening. She leaned against the sink a moment and then went on. If she could only force herself to hurry, maybe she could get done sooner. She moved quickly, washing the dishes and putting

them into the rinse water as she went. It was always easier when she sang, so she started singing and kept it up till she was done. She had plenty of time to get through all of the popular tunes, The Largo, The Lost Chord, and finally Die Lorelei in German. Die Lorelei was the best of all. She had memorized it in grade school, and singing it now always left her feeling proud and self-satisfied.

The dishes were all washed and ready to be dried now. That part of the job wasn't so bad — except that the towel was always too damp toward the last. Anyhow it gave her a chance to smoke. She lit a cigarette, took a few drags, put it on the shelf above the sink, and then alternately dried dishes and smoked. Smoking always made her feel a little weak and dizzy, but it was something to do besides dry dishes, so she always did it.

Finally the last dish was wiped and stacked with the others in a box. Now all she had to do was scrub towels. She changed the water in the sink, poured in a half a bottle of chlorox, and started scrubbing. After only a few scrubs, the chlorox had penetrated the old blisters on her hands, and they broke open and bled. It's a good thing this can't last forever, she

thought. Now that she was so near the end of her job, she could even be philosophic about the blisters. And then she really was through.

It didn't take long to put on fresh make-up and hurry back to the soda fountain. And when she did get there, Pete still sat where she had left him. Good old, patient Pete, she thought, "Say, what's this I hear about your inventing a soda?" he asked. "I guess you can make me one. I'll try anything once."

Kitty picked up a shiny glass and grinned. "Sure, I invented a soda, and you needn't worry because you won't be taking a chance." She jerked just the right amount of vanilla syrup into the glass, tipped it sideways, and ran a thin, hard stream of carbonated water clear around the edge of the syrup until it nearly bubbled up to the rim of the glass. Two dippers of raspberry salad sherbet, a little more fizz, a dash of whipped cream topping, and her masterpiece was done. Proudly, she surveyed the pale lavender in the glass and the white froth standing high above it. As she handed it across the counter to Pete, she said, "I call it Lavender and Old Lace — with arsenic for the customers I don't like," and made a face at him.

## FAVORITES --- I HATE THEM

ISADORE CAMHI

It's a natural and very common prejudice, I think. Possibly you foster the same one. In me, however, it amounts to an obsession, a *supreme* dislike for — favorites. It doesn't matter what kind of favorite it may be; a favorite book, a well-known actor, a famous food, a highly-touted athlete, or possibly even a favorite teacher. I'm against all of them — before I know exactly why. Perhaps it is due to the fact that I, like most other human beings, have a hidden desire to be different, to stand out

from the crowd. Perhaps it is that I am simply too hard-headed to bow down in respect for the favorite of the throng.

Anyway, my prejudice doesn't worry me because it is a normal reaction in that most people sympathize with the underdog. They root for him, and in so doing, automatically pull against the favorite. It is really a "see-saw" affair. It might even give one the impression that it is the favorite who needs the sympathy since so many people want to see the underdog win. But I shall not change horses in "mid-theme."